

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 50, line 33, through page 51, line 6, with the following:

To further elucidate the function of MuRF1 we genetically engineered a MuRF1 null allele in mice, in which genomic DNA spanning the ATG through the exon encoding the F-box region was replaced by a LacZ/neomycin cassette, (Fig 27B) allowing us to simultaneously disrupt MuRF1 function and perform b-galactosidase (b-gal) staining to determine MuRF1 expression patterns. Analysis of the MuRF1 locus demonstrated the expected perturbation in MuRF1 +/- and -/- animals. Further, MuRF1 -/- animals were null for MuRF1 mRNA. MuRF1 -/- mice were viable, fertile and appeared normal. Mice deficient in MuRF1 had normal growth curves relative to wild type litter mates, and skeletal muscles and heart had normal weights and morphology (data not shown).

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace Claim 1 with the following:

1. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence which encodes a protein comprising the amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NOS: 25, 27, or 35.

Please replace Claim 2 with the following:

2. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule which encodes MAFBX, or a fragment thereof, having a sequence selected from the group consisting of

a) the nucleotide sequence comprising the coding region of MAFBX as set forth in SEQ ID NOS: 24, 26, or 35.

(b) a nucleotide sequence who complement hybridizes under stringent conditions to the nucleotide sequences of (a) and which encodes a molecule having the biological activity of MAFBX; or

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(c) a nucleotide sequence which, but for the degeneracy of the genetic code would hybridize to a complement of the nucleotide sequence of (a) or the complement of (b), and which encodes a molecule having the biological activity of MAFBX.

Please replace Claim 3 with the following:

3. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule which is derived from a mammalian genome that:

a) hybridizes under stringent conditions to the nucleic acid molecule of SEQ ID NOS: 24, 26, or 34; and

b) encodes a gene product which contains a ring domain